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RIVER SEVERN | WORCESTER 29th - 31st July 2005

SPRING/SUMMER 2005 ISSUE 10

waterfront

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Camden
then and now

Pubs a' Plenty
we recommend six of the best

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w w w . t h e n e w b o a t . c o . u k

As *Waterfront* drops through your door, BW office based staff will be joining forces with bank staff, volunteers from the Inland Waterways Association, user groups and national organisations such as Groundwork and Sustrans, to take part in the revitalised Towpath Tidy Week. Towpath Tidy, running from the 18 - 24 March, will see litter clean-ups at over 40 waterside locations, sprucing up the waterways in preparation for the summer cruising season ahead. And if you are after some ideas of where to cruise next, then why not take a look at This Is My Patch on page 8 which explores the Lowland Canals or find out what Banbury, on the Oxford Canal, has to offer a boater in a Day in the Life of a Visitor Mooring on page 16.

If, like me, your new year's resolutions are already distant thoughts, then why not give up on the diet and check out some of the waterway pubs that we have Reviewed on page 20, and then work off the extra calories by getting your boat ready for the summer. If this includes renewing your Boat Safety Scheme Certificate then you might want to check out Just Ask on page 12, as *Waterfront* investigates what the changes to the Boat Safety Scheme actually mean for boaters.

Hopefully we'll be seeing some of you at one of the many waterway festivals, rallies or cavalcades around the network over the coming months, and with Crick Boat Show set to be bigger and better than ever, why not come along and see all that's on offer.

Gillian Owen, Editor

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waterfront

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Front cover picture:
Pontcysyllte Aqueduct,
Llangollen Canal

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News in Brief

The latest news and information about boats, boating and BW.

VISITOR INCIDENT REPORT FORMS

BW takes safety very seriously. Every organisation has a duty to record and report certain types of accidents and injuries to their employees, but many do not consider or record incidents and accidents involving members of the public. Incidents are rare, but it is important that everyone involved learns from them.

It has been demonstrated that if near-misses are reported and acted upon then the likelihood of more serious incidents actually occurring is greatly reduced. This is why the Visitor Incident Reporting form has been developed. BW hopes that the information from these forms will help it provide an even safer environment.

If this copy of *Waterfront* magazine has been posted to you directly, then a copy of the form will be enclosed, if you don't have a copy then the form is available to complete on-line at **www.britishwaterways.co.uk/responsibilities/safety/Visitor_incident_report_form,** it can also be picked up at any local waterway office or ordered from BW's Customer Service Centre on 01923 201120.

REGISTER FOR THE STOPPAGE PROGRAMME 2005/06

BW's planned engineering works programme, known as the 'Winter Stoppage Programme', is no longer sent directly to boat licence holders, as not everyone needs this information and an increasing number prefer to check for the latest information electronically. This is displayed on Waterscape.com. You can also register to receive email updates.

If you still prefer the printed booklet, and would like us to send you the 2005/06 edition as soon as it's published in September, please contact BW's Customer Service Centre on 01923 201120, **enquiries.hq@britishwaterways.co.uk**, fax 01923 201300 or write, including your craft and customer number, to **Stoppage**, British Waterways, Willow Grange, Church Road, Watford WD17 4QA. For information about one of the stoppages that happened this year, turn to page 22.

BUSY BOAT SHOW BECKONS

CRICK BOAT SHOW 2005 AT CRICK MARINA ™

The Crick Boat Show is the premier inland waterways festival and this year's show is going to be bigger and better than ever before. With all the exhibitor space sold-out by mid-January, BW expect that this year's Crick will be the best ever.

Taking place over the late May bank holiday weekend, 28-30 May, at Crick Marina near Rugby, Northamptonshire, the show expects to welcome over 26,000 visitors. This year the show will be a fantastic family day out, offering visitors everything from wing walking air displays, free boat trips and a real ale bar, through to live music at the annual Music@Crick festival and a range of children's activities. All of this will be alongside the regular boats, exhibitions and stalls that bring the inland waterways alive at Crick. The keen boater will be well catered for with the latest boat fixtures and fittings on offer as well as canal societies, navigation authorities and restoration groups on-hand to talk to.

For more information visit
www.crickboatshow.co.uk. Discounted tickets can be bought in advance from **Rugby Visitor Centre on 01788 534970** or you can buy full price tickets at the door on the day.

CRAFT UPDATES

Progress on Processing

To ensure that your renewal or boat licence application is processed quickly and efficiently it's essential that all forms are returned together with your boat safety and insurance certificates. This paperwork is necessary to complete the licence process, and if BW doesn't receive all of these items your application form will be returned to you. It's worth noting too, that if all documents are not received on or before the due start date then you will not be eligible for the Prompt Payment Discount.

Continuous Cruiser Crackdown

From now on if you apply for a pleasure boat licence, but don't have a mooring for your craft, you will be asked to complete an additional form, to confirm that you understand and will comply with the continuous cruiser guidelines. The continuous cruiser licence is not an option if you plan to live or work in a fixed area. Head of boating development, Sally Ash said: "BW recognises that there is a shortage of moorings. We are launching a new prospectus to attract investors to develop more off-line mooring sites."

Licence Fees and Conditions

Changes to licence terms and conditions from April 2005 will be minimal, so in common with insurance companies, BW will not re-issue the full booklet with every licence renewal. If you need another copy of the terms and conditions they are published on Waterscape.com or ask BW's Customer Service Centre to send you one. Fees for normal pleasure boat licences rise by 2.9% from 1 April 2005.

Additional Security

From 1 April 2005, BW will be asking for the date-of-birth of the boat owner on new licence applications. The information, a standard item on many third party application forms, will not be mandatory, but will help BW to confirm your identity when contacting BW by phone for information or instructions relating to your licence.

The Key to Cruising

BW's West Midlands Waterways is set to introduce 'conservation' keys, otherwise known as handcuff or anti-vandal keys, in the middle of lock flights as well as at either end. Conservation keys are used to prevent vandals emptying lock pounds of water, which not only prevents boat travel, but is also a waste of water and dangerous to surrounding properties. Fitting the keys in the middle of locks means it will be even harder for vandals to damage them.

The anti-vandal keys are usually needed when travelling through towns and cities, and are used on several waterways. If you are unsure if you need a key please call the local waterway office. Soon you will be able to check for this information on-line at Waterscape.com, as part of the new Boater's Facilities downloadable forms. The keys are very simple to use and cost just £5.00. They can be purchased from any BW office, on-line at Waterscape.com or by phoning BW's Customer Service Centre on 01923 201120.

BOATER FACILITIES UPDATE

Shower facilities and all BW operated water points will be free of charge to boaters by the end of March 2005. Service machines are being re-calibrated so there will be a standard charge of £6.30 for self-operated pump-outs too. This means that there will be consistency across the network for BW facilities.

BOAT SAFETY SCHEME UPDATE

The modernisation of the Boat Safety Scheme (BSS) will come into effect this April bringing various improvements including new-style requirements from the inland navigation authorities for installations and equipment on privately owned boats.

Modernisation aims to make the Scheme more effective by balancing the regulatory, advisory and informative approaches. Examples of change include replacing over 90, mainly construction specific, standards with just 32 goal-setting requirements, although there will still be around 300 potential checks for examiners to complete. A short 'key change' document is available, setting out in simple terms the differences between the old Standards and the new requirements. As part of modernisation, a second edition of the BSS Essential Guide is to be published. It will be available on **www.boatsafetyscheme.com** free of charge from April 2005 or in various formats 'at cost' in the spring. See page 14 for more information about BSS.

APCO LOCK KEEPER OF THE YEAR

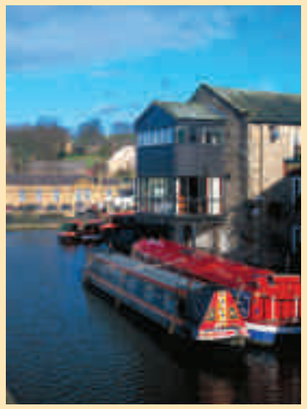
Congratulations go to Colin Payne on the Montgomery Canal, who was recently voted 2004 Lock Keeper of the Year. Ray McDonald on the Rochdale Canal was voted runner up in the Esme Dowling Award, presented each year by the hotel boat section of APCO. BW's Liverpool team - Robert Rowan, Dell Liptrot, Tommy Fayer, John McKenna and Jeff Smith - also won runner up for their work on the Leeds & Liverpool Canal.

For an insight into Colin's life as a lock keeper turn to page 24.

WATERSIDE PUB PARTNERSHIP

BW and Scottish & Newcastle Pub Enterprises have announced the completion of their Waterside Pub Partnership, which will develop a nationwide chain of more than 100 waterside pubs.

The Waterside Pub Partnership's portfolio will include 30 of BW's existing leased pubs and a further 20 sites that will be developed over the next three years. The profits from BW's fifty percent share of the business will be re-invested into maintaining and improving its canals and rivers.



waterscape.com UPDATE

Up-to-date facilities guides

Waterscape.com and BW are preparing new facilities guides for all its canals and rivers. The Boaters' Guides will feature maps of every waterway with sanitary stations, water points and visitor moorings clearly marked. They'll also include advice on unusual locks and bridges, waterway dimensions, and details of any keys you will need.

The guides will be provided as PDF files on Waterscape.com, ready for you to print off and take boating. Whenever new information is added to the website, the guides will automatically be updated - so you will always have the latest information. You'll be able to download the Boaters' Guides from Waterscape.com's canal and river pages later this summer. Waterway offices have been responsible for compiling the information, bringing it together from diverse sources. Waterscape.com is also grateful to boating user groups who have volunteered to check the new service before it goes fully live.

Calling all bookworms

If you are a bit of a bookworm then you should take a fresh look at the Waterway Guides' pages on Waterscape.com. Information about great works of literature inspired by the waterways is starting to be incorporated into general waterway information. The first waterways to be covered include the Thames, Lake Grasmere and the River Exe, with more to be added soon.

SUNDAY TIMES TOP 100 CHOICE

A narrowboat holiday on the Llangollen Canal has been named as a top summer getaway for 2005. Maestermyn Marine in Whittington has been included within a list of 100 Great Summer Holidays compiled by The Sunday Times.

The list, featured in the travel section of the newspaper, suggests 100 must-take holidays from all over the world, and includes far flung destinations such as deepest India and a Kenyan safari, as well as a holiday on the Llangollen Canal. Run by father and son team, Colin and Chris Hill, Maestermyn operate a range of narrowboats, many of which offer home from home luxuries, not forgetting peace, tranquillity and magnificent scenery.

BW'S VEG PLEDGE

BW is currently consulting on its towpath mowing guidelines, more commonly being referred to as the 'Veg Pledge'. In the intervening time, waterway units have committed to do a full edge to edge towpath cut by 31 March (except where environmental restrictions apply).

By Easter BW expects to remove around 95 per cent of trees and saplings between the towpath and water's edge, including vegetation growing out of wash walls.

BW says it is aware of severe problems on some of its north west waterways, including the Lancaster and the Peak Forest canals. A concerted effort to deal with the backlog here is underway, including trials of techniques for removing trees from wash walls and a detailed survey of the vegetation problems.

Robin Evans, BW's chief executive, said: "we recognise that our vegetation management has become a real concern for many boaters. We are undertaking significant work this winter and I expect a dramatic improvement across much of our network by the spring. It will probably take another season to get things absolutely right but please do tell local waterway units of any particular problems you encounter."

OPENNESS AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The first full meeting of the British Waterways Advisory Forum (BWAF) will be taking place on 11 May 2005, the culmination of a significant part of BW's commitment to Openness & Accountability.

In 2003 BW proposed improvements to its regular formal and informal meetings with senior managers, to make them even more inclusive of the many and varied user groups representing people who use the canal network today. The proposals also sought to give more opportunity for individuals and groups to access, understand and contribute to BW's business direction and policy making functions.

The BWAF will be able to raise issues of concern at an annual meeting, while a standing committee drawn from the BWAF membership will also meet with senior BW managers and board members two to three times each year. User Group representatives, led by eminent QC and Professor, Jeffrey Jowell, have devised the newly formed group's constitution and function, and are confident that even better dialogue between BW and its many stakeholders can be gained from these new arrangements.

Meanwhile, the current Ombudsman, Stephen Edell, has announced his retirement after eight years in the post. Mr Edell has been particularly interested in BW's Openness & Accountability proposals and has made numerous contributions to its development. He has played an important role in helping to establish the Ombudsman's Committee (also chaired by Professor Jeffrey Jowell), which, as one of its first tasks, must select a replacement for Mr Edell.

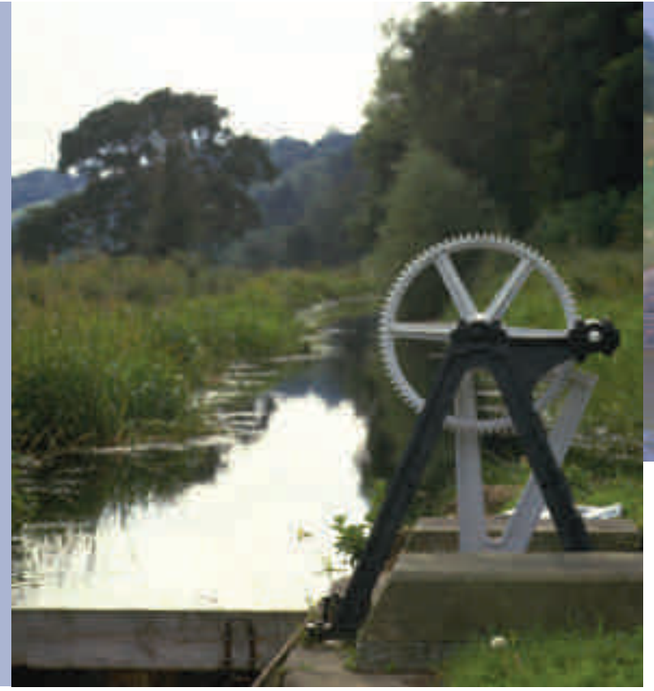
You can read more about BW's commitments to Openness & Accountability at **www.britishwaterways.co.uk/accountability**

IWA £7,125 GRANT FOR MONTGOMERY CANAL

The Inland Waterways Association (IWA) awarded a grant of £7,125 to BW towards the cost of a Conservation Management Strategy for the Montgomery Canal. The Strategy, which was put together with the guidance of the Montgomery Canal Partnership, is now complete and the report, The Montgomery Canal: A Sustainable Restoration, is being finalised.

The Strategy reviews and makes recommendations on the canal's built and natural heritage, the landscape of the canal corridor, the canal's recreational uses and its impact on the local community.

IWA National Chairman John Fletcher said, "overcoming the sensitivity of this restoration scheme has long proved challenging. IWA hopes that the formulation of the Conservation Management Strategy will provide a comprehensive way forward for the future of the Montgomery Canal."



BW TO SPEND £4 MILLION ON DREDGING

BW is allocating £4 million for dredging over the next financial year (2005/06) - a 60% increase on this year's spend. Technical director Stewart Sim said: “We will concentrate on the silted lengths that are used by the most boaters. This will make sure that we provide the greatest benefit to the greatest number. We will use survey and factual information as well as complaints from customers to assess where we will dredge.” The increase in spending also means BW’s ability to perform additional spot dredging is greatly increased.

TOWPATH TIDY

BW staff and volunteers are joining forces to tidy the towpaths. From the 18 - 24 March, Towpath Tidy, the BW annual clean-up effort will be sprucing up the waterways for the summer boating season ahead.

Office based staff will be joining bank staff from around the network, along with volunteers from the Inland Waterways Association, canal societies, user groups and national organisations such as Sustrans and Groundwork, to clear litter at over 40 waterside sites.

BW’s chief executive, Robin Evans says, “all our people are being encouraged to take part in our Towpath Tidy, which is an important part of the commitment I have made to improve our canals and rivers for the enjoyment of all waterway users and visitors.”

National user groups will be involved in the advance planning of an even bigger and better event in 2006.

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NEW WATERSIDE CAFÉS

The newly refurbished Caen Hill Café and Information Centre, will re-open on the 25 March. Situated at the top of the Caen Hill Lock Flight in Devizes. Over the winter months the Café and Information Centre has undergone a transformation. A pergola has been installed in the garden, whilst inside there will be information about local canalside attractions, heritage and wildlife.

The café will be selling a range of hot and cold drinks, snacks, lunches, teas, ices and homemade cakes and it will draw on local produce. Project manager for the café, Susie Mercer said, “we’re especially grateful to the Kennet & Avon Canal Trust who made the project possible with a donation of over £26,000. We hope that people will enjoy a visit to us in the near future.” Opening times for the café from 25 March to the 30 September will be 10am - 5pm every day.

Also opening for business on the 25 March will be a café at Fradley Junction where the Trent & Mersey and Coventry canals meet. Housed in a restored grade 2 listed brick and timber building with an attractive waterside courtyard, the café will complement the visitor centre and Fradley Pools Nature Reserve that opened to the public last year.

Open from 10am - 4pm weekdays and 10am - 6pm weekends, the café will serve a range of hot and cold food and drinks, including locally produced scoop ice cream. With room for 22 customers inside and 30 outside the café is looking forward to a successful summer season.

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MORE CASH FOR COTSWOLDS

The South West of England Regional Development Agency has awarded BW, on behalf of the Cotswold Canals Partnership, £325,000 towards further feasibility studies for the first phase of the restoration of the Cotswolds Canals, plus a further £250,000 towards creating a masterplan framework to progress the regeneration of parts of Stroud along the canal corridor.

This funding approval builds on the Heritage Lottery Fund's contribution of £411,000 towards feasibility work and will hopefully facilitate the release of the earmarked £11.3 million Lottery money.

The Falkirk Wheel.

THIS IS MY PATCH... LOWLAND CANALS

The Lowland Canals comprise the Forth & Clyde Canal, Union Canal and the un-navigable Monkland Canal. They link two of Scotland's major cities, Edinburgh and Glasgow, and are connected by the legendary Falkirk Wheel; the world's first rotating boat lift.

Waterfront's **Zoe Hughes spent a blustery winter's day with two out of the three waterway supervisors that look after the 62½-mile Lowland Canals, to get an insight into 'their patch'.**

Along with a team of 20, Linton McBurnie cares for the Union Canal, and Tommy Thompson and Bill Robertson share the duties on the Forth & Clyde Canal.

NEW LIFE

Tommy is the first to show me his patch - the eastern half of the Forth & Clyde Canal. Tommy tells me, "I've worked on the Lowland Canals for 18 years now. I started on the bank of the Union Canal and stayed there for 15 years moving onto the Forth & Clyde Canal when restoration works began.

"After 40 long years the canal has recently reopened," says Tommy. "And although it does have the feel of a new canal, it is in-keeping with many of the original historic features, so you experience both old and new in one go."

There are plenty of new opportunities for the Lowland Canals and BW constantly receives commercial interest. "At the moment there are not many businesses," Tommy explains, "but in the near future we're hoping for more restaurants, pubs, and marinas, which in turn will mean plenty more visitors."

We arrive next at Auchinstarry Basin, which Tommy describes as "a great place." The injection of new funding has not only helped expand the basin, but also rejuvenated the surrounding area. "You can already see a new lease of life brought about by boats and waterside activity," says Tommy. "And with its growing popularity, BW has introduced a manned information station, so it's a great place for boaters to stop off."

Auchinstarry Basin.

Next up is Dullatar Marsh. A popular site of special scientific interest, the Marsh is one of Tommy's favourite locations. "It's a great place to visit on a balmy summer's evening," he enthuses, "it really is beautiful, and has always been a renowned leisure spot. In fact, at the turn of the century it was a relaxation spot for Glaswegians, with putting greens, boat trips and picnicking areas - you can just picture the idyllic Victorian scene."

Moving further east, along the canal, the impressive statuesque Falkirk Wheel comes into view. "It's amazing how popular the Wheel is," says Tommy. "People come from far and wide to see it. We've even put in overnight moorings for boaters. It's very romantic sleeping under the Wheel, so we expect a lot of interest."

STATE OF THE UNION

We say goodbye to Tommy and the Forth & Clyde Canal here, and Linton takes the helm as we enter the Union Canal.

"I started working on the Union Canal straight from school," says Linton, "and 25 years later I'm still here! She's a beauty and I can only say my favourite part is her whole stretch."

The Union Canal is a contour canal; so there is no need for locks. It is bookcased by The Falkirk Wheel at the west side, and by the newly-developed Edinburgh Quay at the east end.

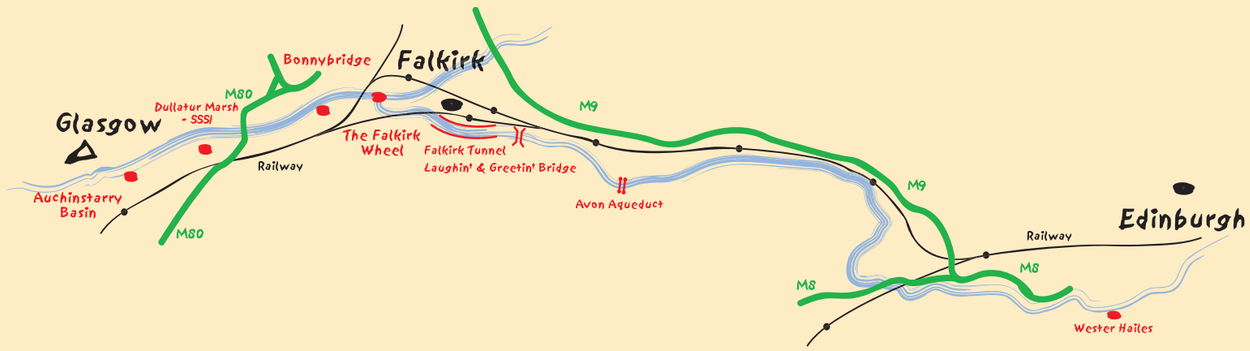
l-r Tommy Thompson and Linton McBurnie.

Scotland's sole canal tunnel is also here, along with some spectacular stone aqueducts, not to mention the breathtaking scenery. "I like to get out and about and can often be spotted on my bike," says Linton. "I do my own brand of mystery shopping, chatting to all sorts of people. I get lots of good ideas, and it also helps me find out what might need improvement."

LAUGHIN' AND GREETIN'

Along this stretch we are welcomed by 'The Laughin' and Greetin' Bridge at Glen Village. The bridge is famous for its carved faces. "There is a funny story to go with them," says Linton. "When the canal was first built the navvies were paid by the mile. There were two men sharing a section, aiming to meet in the middle at Polmont. Unfortunately, one of them hit rock (where the Falkirk tunnel now is) whilst the other navvy rushed on and ended up at the entrance of the tunnel a significantly wealthier man. These faces represent the two men!"

Cont. over...

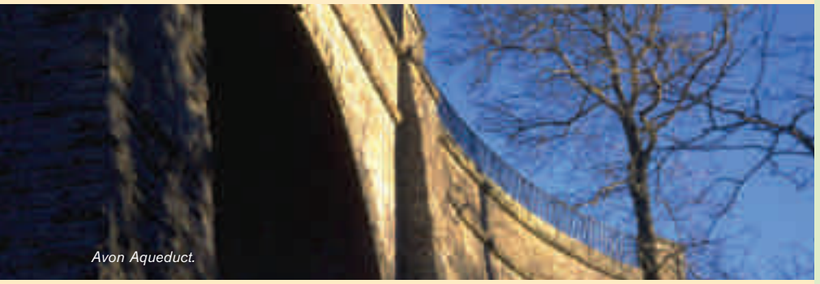


AVON CALLING

Avon Aqueduct, on the Union, is one of the most spectacular to travel along. "The 12-arch structure was built by Thomas Telford," explains Linton, "and it is the second biggest aqueduct on the system, only beaten by the Pontcysyllte on the Llangollen Canal."

The Union Canal drastically changes as we move further towards Edinburgh. "Wester Hailes would once be described as a no-go area, and now look at it," says Linton. Not only has there been a drastic improvement in the physical canal, but also the change in local people's attitude has been phenomenal. "At first there was scepticism about the canal," explains Linton, "but now they're really passionate about what they term 'their canal'."

The canal ends spectacularly at the new Edinburgh Quay development, with restaurants, pubs, businesses, hotels and houses. Linton says, "If you're thinking of cruising the Lowlands it will take around two days. However, I recommend leaving four, if you want to take it all in at a leisurely pace."



Avon Aqueduct.

FOR MORE INFORMATION...

...about the Lowland Canals please contact the office in Falkirk on 01324 671217 or email **enquiries.scotland@britishwaterways.co.uk**. Alternatively visit **Waterscape.com** to find out more about the area.

If you want to learn more about the Lowland Canals, then I recommend the **Lowland Canals - Ribbons of Light video**, it's £11.99 for the DVD and £7.99 for the VHS available from the Falkirk office.

Another reason to visit the Lowland Canals is the Scottish Boat Show held at The Falkirk Wheel, 12 - 14 August 2005. Last year was a great success, and this year promises to be even better.

For more information visit **www.thescottishboatshow.co.uk** or contact the Lowland Canals office.

The Falkirk Wheel Visitor Centre booking line: 08700 500 208

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Tel: 01244 312000 WWW.BARGEE-BILL.CO.UK

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email: enquiries@hallselectrical.com

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Photograph courtesy of The Environment Agency
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Tel: 01753 853911

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Tel: 01932 568681

Chatham Maritime Marina
On the River Medway, in a wonderfully historic area, it's an ideal base from which to explore.
Tel: 01634 899200

For details call 01932 568681
www.mdlmarinas.co.uk

Your cruise, Your choice...

Just Ask...
About BSS

The Boat Safety Scheme (BSS) has been in place now for almost eight years. *Waterfront*'s Zoe Hughes caught up with Rob McLean, the Scheme's communications manager to find out what's next for the BSS.

Rob McLean, BSS communications manager at this year's Schroders London Boat Show.

Firstly Rob, tell us what the BSS is and how it began?

The BSS started in 1997 as a joint initiative between BW and the Environment Agency (EA), to help them run their navigations safely.

The chief aim of the BSS is to help keep people safe as they enjoy the waterways. The navigation authorities have a clear purpose for the Scheme - to stop fires starting on-board boats and to prevent fires spreading, explosions and pollution.

This is done in two ways: by having a boating version of an MOT test which is the BSS examination, and by campaigning on key safety matters. The 'test' is carried out by independent authorised examiners who check fuel installations, powered systems and equipment.

Are the requirements different for other navigation authorities that use the Scheme?

No, the requirements are the same no matter what waterway you cruise on. The Scheme covers around 70% of the navigable inland waterways, but it is not mandatory to have the certificate on all waterways. The Broads Authority are implementing the Scheme in phases, starting this April. Many other navigation and harbour authorities recommend having your boat examined.

I'm buying a boat, what's your advice?

Firstly, we advise you get a pre-purchase survey done before signing on the line, especially with a used boat.

If you are buying a new boat, seek a reputable boat builder, you may also consider getting professional advice from a marine surveyor. The recognised trade organisation, the Canal Boatbuilders Association (CBA) can advise you about their members and their standard form of contract. Whether buying an off-the-shelf cruiser or a bespoke narrowboat, the boatbuilder has to build the boat within EU regulations (the Recreational Craft Directive or RCD) which includes giving you a Declaration of Conformity. Similar to newly built cars, the navigation authorities usually accept the Declaration for the first four years.

It gets a bit more complicated if it is a sailaway. As you are building it yourself and not necessarily getting it formally marked inline with the RCD, then the boat may need to be examined. Because sailaways are fitted out after delivery, it is necessary to check it a year after it's first licensed. There is a BSS information sheet about sailaways available from the BW Customer Service Centre or the BSS Office.

What are the changes happening from 1 April 2005?

It's mainly relaxed the requirements for private boats. The 90 or so construction based standards have been replaced by just 32 goal-setting requirements. For example diesel tank filler pipes will no longer need to be marked with a British Standard if we can check it is in good condition throughout.

It now places greater onus on boaters making the right choices to ensure their own safety. Boaters will also have to comply with seven new minor requirements such as labelling a locker if it's where the fire extinguisher is kept.

These days people are using the latest appliances on their boats, and this can mean that examiners are not immediately sure if they comply with the BSS requirements, they can now check this with the BSS head office within minutes, hours or days. That's rather better than what sometimes happened in the past.

How are you telling boaters about the changes?

Well apart from this interview, the Scheme is publishing a new edition of its Essential Guide which clearly sets out the navigation authorities' requirements. It explains how to comply with them, and the checks you can use to make sure you do. The Guide will also help boaters make the right choices to ensure their own safety when adding or replacing equipment.

> "The chief aim of the BSS is to help keep people safe as they enjoy the waterways."

Both the requirements and the BSS Essential Guide were drafted with the help of boaters, examiners and experts in the marine trade.

A fold-out of the key changes to the current Essential Guide has been included with this Waterfront. Alternatively the new edition of the Guide will be available for a small charge later in April from Waterscape.com, BW's Customer Service Centre and most navigation authorities. From this April the new Guide is free to download from **www.boatsafetyscheme.com**

Are there any exemptions to having a certificate, and why?

Firstly, most navigation authorities will allow visiting boats, without a certificate, for one month if they make a simple declaration that they meet the requirements. This helps people to bring their boat onto the network to arrange an examination. Also, there are exemptions for unpowered boats and boats with outboards, an integral fuel tank and are open to the elements.

For further information about these exemptions please contact BW's Customer Service Centre or your navigation authority as appropriate.

How would I find an examiner in my area?

Lists of examiners are available from your navigation authority, the BSS office or the BSS website **www.boatsafetyscheme.com/searchforanexaminer**

We advise you to ask other boat owners, check out the waterway magazines and websites and speak to examiners. Fees can vary, so it's worth shopping around.

Examiners in training at Evesham College.

Examiners checking fuel installations, powered systems and equipment.

IF SOMEONE WANTS TO FIND OUT MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE BSS, WHERE DO THEY GO?

Boat Safety Scheme, Willow Grange, Church Road, Watford WD17 4QA.
T 01923 201278 **F** 01923 201420
E bss.enquiries@boatsafetyscheme.com
or visit **www.boatsafetyscheme.com**

BW Customer Service Centre, Willow Grange, Church Road, Watford WD17 4QA
T 01923 201120 **F** 01923 201300
E enquiries.hq@britishwaterways.co.uk
(Lines are open 8-8 Monday to Friday and 9-1 Saturdays).

THEN AND NOW

CAMDEN

Camden Lock is a bustling centre of activity located on the Regent's Canal in north east London.

It's the best known and most visited canal site in London, much removed from its rural beginnings. Today it is most famous for its vibrant canalside markets, cafes, restaurants, bars, boat trips, studios and comedy club. A lesser-known fact is that this site was the location for the very first lock to be built on the Regent's Canal – an undertaking that proved to be more expensive and painful than first expected.

21st Century Camden.

A lock keeper at Camden Locks in 1948.

Right: Petrol driven tractor pulling a wide barge loaded with timber in 1953.

INFORMATION

To find out more about the Regent's Canal visit **Waterscape.com**

For historical information visit **www.canalmuseum.org.uk**

And for information about the Camden area visit **www.camden.gov.uk**

THE CANAL CATALYST

The locks around Camden were originally on an old coaching route and largely agricultural land. The coming of the Regent's Canal was the catalyst for Camden's expansion.

From the River Thames at Limehouse to Paddington, the 8½- mile Regent's Canal today is one of the capital's best-kept secrets. The canal was built following the opening of the Grand Junction Canal Paddington Arm in 1801, linking the industrial Midlands to London's first by-pass road, later the Euston Road, which opened in 1756 from Paddington to Islington.

In 1810 Thomas Homer approached the architect John Nash to work on the proposed canal running alongside the by-pass road and planned to extend the route to Limehouse Basin on the Thames, so that cargoes could be directly transferred from canal boats to ocean going ships.

Work began in 1812 following The Regent's Canal Act. The route was agreed with Nash's help and he named the canal after his friend the Prince Regent, later King George IV. His assistant for 40 years, James Morgan, was appointed engineer, whilst canal promoter Thomas Homer became Superintendent.

This was Morgan's first canal project and it took eight years to complete, with twelve locks, 36 road bridges, nine footbridges, ten railway bridges and two major tunnels at Maida Hill tunnel (272 yards) and Islington Tunnel (960 yards).

EXPERIMENTING AND EMBEZZLING

The canal opened in stages, the first from Paddington to Camden in 1816. Progress was hampered by a series of delays, including the experimental hydro-pneumatic lock failure at Camden and the lengthy land compensation claims for Thomas Lord's cricket ground and William Agar's home. But the most astonishing involved the canal's original promoter Homer, who embezzled nearly £1500 of subscribers' money in 1815!

Keeping the Regent's Canal full of water was going to be a problem as the original Act of Parliament stated that no water could be taken from the Grand Junction Canal. Sir William Congreve designed an experimental hydro-pneumatic boatlift at Camden in 1815 as an alternative to locks. After four years' trial, and a serious accident, the invention was abandoned with a flight of three conventional locks used instead.

The second stage from Camden to Limehouse Basin finally opened on 1 August 1820, costing twice the original estimate. Despite these set backs, it attracted high profile tenants including the Imperial Gas, Light & Coke Company's gas works, Thomas Pickford Ltd and later Fellows, Morton & Clayton Ltd.

AN EXPLOSIVE CHAPTER

The Regent's Canal did not follow the same pattern of decline as most canals. From 1837 the Birmingham to London Railway worked in tandem with the canal using the same warehouses. The canal continued to serve local industries until the 1870s when freight toll charges were slashed. The canal company had to accept cargoes which the railways would not. This diversification in cargoes resulted in an explosion at Macclesfield Bridge in 1874.

Sparks from the chimney of a steam tug lit gunpowder on the deck of another barge killing several people. The bridge was rebuilt using some of its original columns and is known locally as 'Blow-Up' Bridge.

The next decades saw company mergers and ownership changes following the Second World War. 1956 saw the end of horse drawn commercial traffic; the 1960s the construction of the M1 motorway, and denationalisation of road haulage. As road transport became more advanced, commercial traffic on the Regent's Canal finally ended.

MAGNETIC APPEAL

During the 1970s Camden was the site for one of the first canalside regeneration projects in the UK giving the area a new lease of life.

Dingwalls Timber Wharf was converted into Camden Lock Centre. The stores, offices, stables and haylofts surrounding the basin were all transformed into the vibrant commercial buildings they are now.

And Camden is not just about shopping and leisure, last year a national wildlife survey spotted over 60 different species along our waterways, including rare and protected creatures. Sightings of kingfishers and even terrapins were recorded in the Camden area.

Camden has become enormously popular over the last 25 years and continues to be a magnet for boaters, tourists and artists. It is now the home to not just one world famous market, but six busy open-air and indoor markets, attracting more than 150,000 visitors per week, a world away from its humble beginnings!

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A VISITOR MOORING

BANBURY

Banbury, famous for its place in the nursery rhyme 'Ride a cock horse to Banbury Cross', is also home to some of the busiest visitor moorings on the Oxford Canal. With two fantastic waterside attractions, Banbury Museum and the scheduled Ancient Monument - Tooley's Boatyard, as well as fantastic shopping facilities, Banbury is a great place for boaters to make a stop. *Waterfront* went to investigate this historic market town.

Mr & Mrs Deakin at Banbury's 24hr moorings.

Banbury hosts both 24 and 48 hour moorings, with the latter changing to 14 days during the winter. Although there are plenty of visitor mooring berths, the temptation to over-stay here means that some boaters arrive to find no spaces. With this in mind BW decided to follow the normal town centre practice of setting time limits on length of stay. If you over-stay beyond the time indicated on the signs at the mooring site, you can expect to be charged £25 for the privilege.

FAIR DEAL

We start our day meeting up with Nigel Powell. At the moment Nigel is acting foreman on this stretch of the Oxford Canal and it's his job to ensure that boats aren't overstaying on the moorings at Banbury. Everyday Nigel or one of his colleagues notes down which boats are moored up, and then checks the following day, issuing tickets to those who have overstayed. "Banbury is a popular place to stop, and by having an overstaying fee, it means that everyone can enjoy the attractions and facilities here. I think it's a fair way of allocating mooring spaces at a busy spot and most of the boaters I meet agree with me."

Why do you think boaters should stop here?

"Banbury is a very historic place on the inland waterways. Tooley's Boatyard is where Tom Rolt, author of 'Narrowboat' started his journey on the canals, and the museum here also has a dedicated section about the waterways, so it's very interesting for boaters. In fact there's some information about my own family in there. My great grandfather, grandfather and father all worked on the waterways, and now my brother and I both work for BW. My great grandfather was 'Chocolate Charlie Atkins' and his Fellows, Morton and Clayton workboat, Mendip, is now on show at Gloucester Boat Museum." Aside from the history Nigel adds, "Banbury is still very much a market town, every Thursday and Saturday there's a market, so it's good to pick up provisions for the rest of your journey."

THE WAY TO WIGAN PIER

The first boaters we catch-up with are Mr & Mrs Cooper on their narrowboat Halcyon. They've just fuelled up and are at the 48-hour moorings, a five minute stroll from Banbury Castle Quay Shopping Centre.

Where are you heading to?

"Well, we have been living on-board our boat now for a few months, and as the winter stoppages are nearly complete we are starting our journey to Wigan, where my daughter lives."

Why have you chosen to stop here?

"Stopping at Banbury is very useful as you can get fuel and water, as well as being able to walk down the towpath to the town centre for shops and supermarkets. We've stopped here before because the moorings are good - so central. It's quiet at the moment but I imagine it will get busier in the summer months. The Tourist Information Centre is right next to the canal so you can get lots of local information from there too."

CRICK-WARD BOUND

Just outside Banbury Museum, at the 24-hour moorings, we spot 'Horus' and have a chat with its owners, Mr & Mrs Deakin.

Why are you in Banbury?

"We've made a stop here to take our dog to the vet. Banbury has great facilities and you can walk to them all very easily from the canal. A great job has been done here with the visitor moorings. We continuously cruise, so places like this are good to stop and stock up. We travelled down the canal to visit relatives for Christmas and now we are heading towards Crick for the boat show, stopping off at various places along the way, and we'll also update our Boat Safety Certificate."

Would you recommend a stop here to others?

"Yes, the facilities are great. We are very lucky as we get to cruise along through the winter too, when it's quieter. I think these moorings will be popular in the summer. What I would recommend to new boaters is to slow down. That's why we love boating, we get to go at such a slow pace you notice things that normally pass you by, like the birds and the insects in the vegetation. And especially in the spring you need to slow down as the wash from your boat can knock the moorhen's eggs from her nest on the edge of the reeds."

HISTORY LESSON

Next we bump into Matthew Armitage, director of Tooley's Boatyard. He shows us around the historic boatyard, with its working forge, dry dock, chandlery and the belt machinery workshop. Matthew explains, "this is one of the oldest boatyards on the inland waterways. There's so much history here, from the unique anvil in the forge, to the machinery, which is so robust it still works today."

You can get a guided tour, take a Roses & Castles painting workshop and much more at the boatyard. Even just a wander around this Scheduled Ancient Monument is very interesting. "Lots of the yard is actually made from the wood of old boats," explains Matthew. "Times were very hard for the boatyards in the twenties and thirties as the trains took over, so everything useful was recycled and used for more than one purpose."

Our day at the visitor moorings in Banbury proved to be very interesting, with plenty to keep everyone entertained, from shops and markets, to hands-on museums and boating heritage, and all within a five-minute stroll of the visitor moorings.

Mr Cooper on his boat 'Halcyon'.

Would you like to get involved with local boating issues?

Or find out about boating-related topics? If the answer is yes, then you might want to consider becoming a member of the National Association of Boat Owners (NABO).

INTERESTED IN JOINING?

If you are interested in joining NABO please write to them, email them or see them at some of the festivals and shows throughout the summer. Alternatively if you spot a boat flying the NABO burgee or displaying a sticker, then NABO is sure its members would be more than happy to give you some more information.

Write to:
NABO
Freepost (BM8367)
Birmingham
B31 2BR

Or get more details at: **www.nabo.org.uk**

NABO

National Association of Boat Owners

NABO was formed in 1991 and has a growing membership of more than 3,000 boaters. The aim of the Association is quite simple - to improve the lot of all who own vessels on Britain's rivers and canals. With this in mind, the Association focuses on issues such as licensing, moorings, boat safety certification and dredging. Despite its relatively short life as an organisation, NABO has already gained recognition from navigation authorities, other waterway associations and government bodies.

Waterfront's Gill Owen caught up with NABO chairman & publications editor, Stuart Sampson, to find out more, “I became involved with NABO after reading an article in a waterway magazine which suggested boaters should become a member of one of the national organisations,” explains Stuart. “Another boater recommended NABO and it seemed to me that it suited what I was looking for.”

ONE VOICE TO THE NAVIGATION AUTHORITIES

NABO was formed by a group of boaters who decided to get together to represent the interests of private boat-owners and promote their specific needs.

As Stuart says, “really we represent everyone who has a private boat licence. This means that we are a great group for the authorities to consult with, as we represent a large group of their users. In fact our own council members enjoy a diverse range of boating, from a continuous cruiser living aboard a narrowboat to someone who takes a river cruiser out for a day or two at a time.”

Having direct contact with the navigation authorities is a great benefit, as this means NABO can ensure boater's views are heard at the highest level. They attend regular user group meetings, and take part in consultations.

NABO chairman, Stuart Sampson.

REPRESENTING MEMBERS

With a council made up of 12 volunteers, a regional secretary for each area of the country and a river-users co-ordinator, the Association can advise individual members, as well as taking up national concerns. Members are kept up-to-date through the newsletter ‘NABO News’, e-mail bulletins and a dedicated website, with a special member's only section. Members are also invited to attend the AGM, council meetings or simply phone, write or email Council members with any news or questions.

Every member receives a copy of NABO News seven times a year, and in each edition current issues are discussed, and member's questions answered. NABO members are encouraged to report on-line, any problems they discover on any stretch of water; from a fallen tree, through to a defective lock. These report boards are free for all boaters to use via NABO's website, **www.nabo.org.uk**, whilst members can receive news for the areas they choose via an emailed bulletin list. “The report boards and the list are very helpful,” explains Stuart, “we are all pre-warned of potential problems and we can forward these lists to the authorities to let them know of the problems boaters are facing out on their waters.”

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

NABO has made considerable gains since it started. “An example of how we feel we've made a difference has been our involvement with the Boat Safety Scheme. By being actively involved, we've worked with the Scheme and others, to help the navigation authorities produce the revised version of their requirements and the BSS examination, which we think boaters will find much more acceptable.” And the BSS has been equally impressed with NABO's 'broad experience and willingness to roll up its sleeves and get involved'.

Despite producing all of NABO's publications and attending council meetings throughout the year, Stuart still finds time to make the most of his boat and get out and use the system. Stuart explains, “My first experience of boating was in 1974 on a hireboat. Then in 1976 I bought my first boat, a shell that I fitted out myself, and was cruising in by 1978. Now I have a narrowbeam Dutch barge that I also fitted out. I'm passionate about the waterways and I think I've covered most of the network.

If like Stuart, you are interested in joining them then see the box above.

Pubs a' Plenty

waterscape.com

We all know that navigating the inland waterways and enjoying waterside pubs go hand in hand. With the summer boating season just around the corner, *Waterfront's* Becky Mutlow decided to investigate some of the watering holes and historic inns of the system and check out the specialities they have on offer for boaters.

Waterscape.com, the website for inland waterways, offers a facility to search for waterside pubs in most waterside locations. Simply select 'waterways guide', choose a particular canal and select pubs in the 'search directory'. Waterscape.com gives you contact details for the pub and even a map to pinpoint exactly where it is - very handy for planning your day's navigation. **Visit Waterscape.com.**

"It's a great place to go because it's in a superb location, the food's really good, and it has a great atmosphere. You can take a towpath walk and, in the summer, you can sit and watch the boats."

Vanessa Wiggins, BW's communications manager recommends the Cross Guns

The Lion Quays Hotel & Restaurant.

The Clachnaharry Inn.

THE LION QUAYS HOTEL & RESTAURANT

Great for: **free moorings for customers**

The Lion Quays, by the Llangollen Canal, has the best of both worlds with log fires to keep you cosy in the chilly months, and a waterside terrace to enjoy a cooling drink in the summer. Lynn Pegler, BW's marketing & communications manager, Wales & Border Counties, said: "It's a really attractive place to enjoy a Sunday afternoon pint in the sunshine."

To the delight of boaters, the Lion Quays provides 10 free moorings, enabling you to tie up your boat and pop in for a drink or meal. The current menu consists of light snacks such as Lancashire cheese and green grape baguette and mussel salad and, for the more demanding appetite, griddled swordfish loin and rib steaks.

Lion Quays Hotel & Restaurant
Moreton
Nr Weston Rhyn
Shropshire SY11 3EN
T 01691 684300
www.lionquays.co.uk

NAVIGATION INN

Great for: **guest ales, children**

The Navigation Inn on the Peak Forest Canal is at the heart of the community surrounding the historic Bugsworth Basin. With its cheery atmosphere, and involvement in local events such as July's 'well dressing', you can understand why. The 200-year-old pub offers a host of guest ales - around 70 annually. "It's not often you can find a pub with such a broad range of ales," said Glenn Millar, BW's economic development manager. Seasonal delights such as winter mulled wine and summer farm cider combined with home cooked food including a boatman's lunch and a healthy 'calorie counter' option are on offer.

Navigation Inn
Brookside, Buxworth
High Peak
Derbyshire SK23 7NE
T 01663 732072
www.navigationinn.co.uk

THE CROSS GUNS

Great for: **good food**

Located near the Kennet & Avon Canal, River Avon and Avoncliff Aqueduct, this family run establishment offers a warm welcome of old beams, a 16th century inglenook and log burning stoves. An extensive menu awaits you, using local produce wherever possible and there's a variety of tipples to suit most tastes.

The Cross Guns
Avoncliff
Bradford-on-Avon
Wiltshire BA15 2HB
T 01225 862335
www.crossguns.net

All of these pubs were recommended by either The Good Pub Guide 2005, Nicholson Guide to the Waterways, Campaign for Real Ales (CAMRA) or by positive word of mouth.

The Boat Inn
Stoke Bruerne
Nr. Towcester
Northants NN12 7SB
T 01604 862428
www.boatinn.co.uk

THE BOAT INN

Great for: **vegetarians, cooked breakfasts**

Opposite Stoke Bruerne Canal Museum on the Grand Union Canal, The Boat Inn has a distinct charm and history attracting canalside business all day long. It even has its own shop! A mouth watering menu awaits; from an English breakfast, or a boatman's meal, to a candlelit dinner. There's great variety for vegetarians from an oversized Yorkshire pudding filled with vegetables to vegetarian fajitas. The Boat Inn also offers 'traditional Northamptonshire skittles', cabaret and a music & dance festival. Glenn Millar, BW's economic development manager, commented: "The Boat Inn is an enjoyable, ingle-nooky welcoming pub, in beautiful surroundings."

The Fleur de Lys
Lowsonford
Henley-In-Arden
Warwickshire B95 5HJ
T 01564 782431

THE FLEUR DE LYS

Great for: **non smoking atmosphere, waterside garden**

On the Stratford-upon-Avon Canal, The Fleur de Lys is a quaint village pub, with a large canalside garden. There are comfy armchairs and an appetising menu, including speciality pies (this is where the famous Fleur-de-Lys pies were once cooked). Also on offer is a range of guest ales and wines in this strictly non-smoking pub. For boaters, a water point and moorings are available but it is advised to ask first, and not to tie up to the trees. Liz Waddington, BW's staff newspaper editor, said "A nice country pub atmosphere, the sandwiches were huge!"

THE CLACHNAHARRY INN

Great for: **ales, home cooked food**

This is the first and oldest pub to greet you at Clachnaharry Sea Lock on the Caledonian Canal according to the cheery landlord George. The 17th century pub specialises in lentil soup, and the Scottish dish 'stovies' which comprises meat and potato heavily seasoned with salt, pepper and onions, all washed down with one of ten real ales. Speaking of ales, the pub has its own 'Clachnaharry Village Ale' and own whiskey labels too - a gem on the Highland canals. Scott MacKay BW's canal administrator, said: "The pub is popular all year round, with very nice food and two small bars selling real ales, it makes for a cosy environment."

The Clachnaharry Inn
17-19 High Street
Clachnaharry
Inverness IV3 8RB
T 01463 239806
www.clachnaharryinn.co.uk

WATER WORKS

BW has spent over £30 million on planned engineering and maintenance works this winter

Jason slides a new gate collar into position, Les awaits on harness and tether to secure with cotters.

Lock 31 main stoppage team l-r Les Sumpter, Bob Gee, Jason Watson, Frank (Unic cranes).

Famous landmark, Lowsonford lock 31, trialling the new crane.

This winter BW spent over £30 million on planned engineering and maintenance works, known to many of us as 'stoppages'.

Waterfront's Hannah Kitchener visited a stoppage on the Stratford-upon-Avon Canal to take a closer look at what was involved.

THE BEST LAID PLANS

The planning process for this stoppage, between Lapworth, Lock 22 to Preston Bagot, Lock 38, started in earnest in June 2004, with contributions from the engineering, safety, environment and heritage teams in Fazeley. The maintenance team who work on the stoppage are closely involved in the early planning stages and are encouraged to put forward their ideas too.

Not only are there a lot of people involved, there's also a lot of essential paper work to complete; risk assessments, method of work statements and environmental appraisals. This stoppage only requires liaison with one external party, the local council, to obtain listed consent for the works. Some stoppages may require the agreement of several parties to gain access or for third party works.

The Stratford-upon-Avon Canal is a linear length so it closes for stoppages in two halves; the northern end closed before Christmas and the southern section in January. This gives an opportunity for some boating along the canal over the winter months. Many closures along this stretch have safety barriers along the towpath, allowing public access by foot during the closure period.

BOB'S BIT

Bob Gee, maintenance supervisor, responsible for 26 miles of the Stratford-upon-Avon Canal, started his career on the bank over 21 years ago. His general works programme budget is around £115,000 (excluding labour costs) each year.

I caught up with Bob and his team: Jason Watson, Les Sumpter, Chris Lee, Tim Eagles and Frank Halpin, at Lock 31 where a new top end gate was being craned into position. The team normally have a quick meeting each morning to plan their day's work. And depending on the job, they may also have a debrief session to discuss how things went.

"This stoppage will last for nine weeks," explains Bob. "Works include two new gates, brickwork repairs, paddle and gate maintenance and four lock cleans." Lock cleans are essential for trouble-free boating, as silt build-ups behind the bottom gates makes the gates hold out. "This is characteristic of locks built on this stretch as they don't have ground paddles, only gate paddles in the bottom ends," says Bob. "When the gates hold out, the rubbers get ripped, increasing the need for lock maintenance."

LISTED LOCKS

This lock is a classified listed structure as it is located next to a barrel roofed cottage. These cottages are unique to the Stratford-upon-Avon Canal. They were built for canal workers and have a barrel-vaulted roof as the builders knew how to construct arches for road bridges and aqueducts and used the same technique for roofing houses.

Works at this lock include removing an old metal gate which had been put in by the National Trust in 1984, before the canal came into BW's ownership. Listed consent was required to replace the metal with timber which is more in keeping with canal heritage.

The new gate was ordered in September 2003 and built by BW Bradley Repair Yard by Bob Cartright and his team. It's made from European oak from FSC sustainable sources with a full trace certificate, and should last for around 20 years.

"All works on this stretch are carried out by skilled BW operatives."

In May 2004, Mark Ashlee, foreman, Bradley workshop, came to the site to measure up for the build. The gate was then delivered by a lorry driven by Barry Tapscott, who then loaded it onto a hopper.

Whilst the top end of the lock was de-watered, the paddles and fixings were serviced. Other works included taking out the old quoin, known locally as a clap iron, on the towpath side. Luckily, the team managed to salvage the quoin and refit it. The top cill was also tidied up.

CRANE IT IN

All works on this stretch are carried out by skilled BW operatives, with the exception of operating the new crane that BW's Central Shires Waterway is piloting, for possible national roll out. Bob explains, "my lads have the skills to operate the crane but using an experienced driver who operates the equipment on a daily basis is safer."

An old top gate is removed to make way for its replacement, remotely controlled under Unic crane operator Frank's careful control.

The new crane makes getting plant and materials on and off site easier and safer, especially if the works are in confined spaces.

Bob, along with Paul Boddy, southern senior engineer, is currently writing a best practice guide and during this pilot they incorporated improvements as they went along. Bob adds, "we actually improved a few things from Lock 29 to Lock 31, so its not, 'oh, we can improve on that, but we can leave it to next year', we improve as we're running if you like. That's important."

BACK TO THE FLOOR

Another visitor to Lock 31 was general manager, Central Shires Waterways, Tony Harvey. Unlike me, he was not on site to observe, but to get his hands dirty! Tony wanted to work on the stoppage to gain a better understanding of the works and issues that can be caused by weather and site conditions. His jobs included helping fit the gate, cleaning 120 kilos of rubbish out of the lock and getting the crane off site.

He's looking forward to walking past Lock 31 this summer, knowing he helped to repair it. Tony said "I really enjoy getting out of the office and being part of the stoppage works.

Central Shires general manager Tony Harvey undertakes paddle maintenance.

My 'back to the floor days' give me a real insight into the maintenance of the canal network and an understanding of what the operational guys do everyday. After all, they are the ones who keep the system in such good condition."

FOR THE LATEST STOPPAGE UPDATES

To find out how to get stoppage information and updates, see News in Brief on page 2.

WORKING for the Waterways

MAD ABOUT FRADLEY

From being a mine of information to selling giftware, Yvonne Beech is the lady to know at Fradley Visitor Centre. She manages the seven days-a-week centre, which keeps her busy, even in the winter months. “Ever since the opening of the nature trail and reservoir at Fradley, we’ve had a lot more visitors. The nature trail offers scenic walks and attracts visitors from all over, especially after the reservoir featured recently on the TV programme Waterworld. Yvonne gets to meet a lot of visitors and receives a whole host of enquiries, from questions about the area to how to buy a boat and moorings. “Having owned a boat in the past I understand boaters and the nature of their queries.”

There’s another side to Yvonne’s job which keeps her busy. “I take care of the retail aspect of the centre, we offer a lot of giftware that I order and often go to retail shows to choose new lines.” The visitor centre sells all sorts from maps and books, to waterway-related toys and gifts, BW heritage collection model vans and boating caps, “we also sell some typically English goods such as traditional recipe preserves, painted canal-ware and nostalgic tins and postcards, which are extremely popular, especially with the international visitors.” Yvonne informs us that they soon hope to develop a small chandlery line of windlasses, mooring hooks and pins.

Yvonne is very passionate about her job, “I thoroughly enjoy what I do and am really looking forward to the summer season, especially because the new Fradley café will be open, and will attract even more visitors to the area.”

Yvonne got into the waterways way of life from an early age. “I knew about BW as a child, as my late father was a lock keeper at Saltersford Locks on the River Weaver and we also used to go on a lot of boating holidays.” Yvonne started at BW over 15 years ago as a temporary administrator in Fradley and she moved into purchasing and also did some reception work. “We had a small scale retail section in our reception, and that experience helped me to get the job here at the visitor centre.”

Yvonne is very passionate about Fradley and has remained there for all her BW working life. “I’ve had numerous opportunities to relocate elsewhere with BW, but I just love this place, I thoroughly enjoy the variety, the people I work with are lovely and I get to meet so many interesting people during my day.”

PAYNE’S PLEASURE

Lock keeper Colin Payne is certainly dedicated to the job, and he was recently awarded the APCO Lock Keeper of the Year Award for the second time in his career.

Colin has worked on the Montgomery Canal for over 30 years, originally as a bricklayers labourer. “I used to work as part of a waterway gang, and the work we did then was mostly agricultural. From fixing fencing to clearing trees and keeping the towpath edges cut properly.”

Colin is passionate about the history of the area, and his local knowledge, particularly of the canal, is immense.

He even collects Montgomeryshire antique Welsh dressers, unique to the area and renowned for their quality. “The canal is a way of life now rather than just a job, which is funny as I only started to work for the waterways because my brother did before me, and now we have over 60 years of service between us.” Colin’s had his role of lock keeper at Frankton Junction for 10 years, and the sections of the waterway that have been restored are very popular with boaters. “I get to meet a lot of people; hire boaters, hotel boat operators and private boaters, as well as walkers and visitors to the area, and everyone is treated the same. Part of my job is to ensure that the water is used efficiently and safely.

Once I explain to people that’s why we operate the locks at certain times and in a certain way most people understand it’s for the benefit of everyone.”

If you ever stop at Frankton and have a question you’ll find that Colin will be able to help. “I always keep the latest bus times, and list of events at the locks so that I can let people know how to get to some nearby towns and historic houses. I also let the ladies know if it’s market day as well as being able to point people in the right direction of good country pubs.”

Health and safety is important on the waterways and Colin will point out the dangers and give valuable advice to boaters, “you are never too old to learn, especially if you are new to the canals. I just want people to enjoy themselves.”

It comes as no surprise that Colin has won the Lock Keeper of the Year award twice when you see the letters and positive comments that so many boaters have sent to him. “I was delighted when I first won the award in 2000, and to win again is brilliant.”

KEEPING IT IN THE FAMILY

Senior plant operator Chris Chapman is the 25th member of his family to work on the River Trent. “I wanted to continue our family tradition of working on the Trent. My father, grandfather, and their brothers all worked on the River, a time stretching over 100 years.” Chris explained many of his ancestors had worked on the River Trent just after the war when it was in 24-hour operation. “They were skippers, delivering all sorts, from wood and wool to fruit and cigarettes, through the heart of the Midlands.”

Chris started his career in 1962 on a mere £5 per week salary, and has been devoted to the waterways for the past 42 years. “I work on a tug called Arthur-a-Bland. All the Trent tugs are named after Robin Hood characters, even though mine is a lesser known one!” Chris works on a stretch over 70 miles long between Gainsborough and Beeston, covering one tidal and six non-tidal locks.

The job varies from day to day for Chris, from fixing mooring facilities into position to putting 30ft piling into the river bed for pontoons. Chris explains he often helps with his tug when gravellers get into difficulties. “The other week, a graveller got stuck and blocked the entire navigation by Newark Town Bridge. A slight mis-judgement by the skipper can lead the graveller into difficulties. We got the tug and some winches to pull the craft back into position so it could carry on its journey. It took over four hours and even got a mention in the local newspaper.”

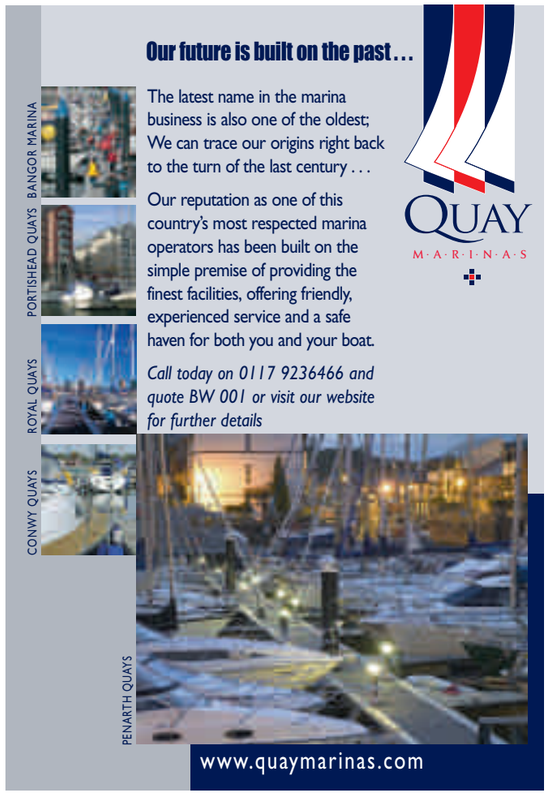
Chris explains that he enjoys the responsibility of his job and spending a lot of time by the water. “What’s great about this job is meeting lots of interesting people especially on the pleasure craft, I also enjoy being around the wildlife and seeing things you wouldn’t normally see in the city.” We are not just talking about the average fox or bird here, Chris and his colleagues have spotted many of natures delights including a seal, and even a member from the dolphin family - a porpoise.

SAFE AS HOUSES

BW is dedicated to safety, for its staff and for visitors to the waterways. Peter Wade, safety advisor, has made it his job to ensure we all go home safe, so if you see him around the network then he’s probably checking just that. “My job is very varied; one day I might be doing a site visit somewhere on the network, then I could be giving a presentation to a waterway unit to highlight safety issues, or I could be doing desk work such as preparing information documents.” Peter has produced booklets such as ‘Working on craft in dry docks’ and ‘Lifting craft on BW property’. If you are going to be carrying out of this type of work then the documents can be ordered direct from your local office or BW’s Customer Service Centre. And he helps BW staff who organise and work at events and exhibitions by running training courses.

“I’ve always been close to the water,” explains Peter, “as a child I lived alongside the Stainforth & Keadby Canal. Now I’ve worked for BW over 32 years, from an apprentice carpenter on the South Yorkshire Navigations, to engineer and waterway manager on the North Yorkshire Waterways. My current job takes me around the entire network, anywhere from the Highlands to London Docklands. My passion for fishing means I see some of it in my spare time too. In fact I’ve probably been to every waterway we manage!”

Peter is part of the team that are encouraging boaters and other visitors to complete the Visitor Incident Report Form. “We want people to let us know if they’ve had an accident or a near miss so we can make sure it won’t happen again in the future. I really enjoy my job and have a real passion for the waterways, and it’s made even better by knowing that other people will be safe when they enjoy them too.”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Letters

Dear *Waterfront*

Re: *Waterfront* Autumn/Winter 2004 Issue 9, page 5 - Reporting visitor incidents.

I read this article and was reminded of an incident on the Ashton Canal in July 2004.

I have a 55' narrow boat and was coming from Uppermill to Wigan. I entered the Ashton Canal and encountered gangs of youths who urinated on us from the lock bridges, boarded the boat, and eventually bombarded us with stones and beer bottles.

What were we supposed to do in this situation? If we had called the police or BW how soon would any assistance have arrived - if at all? When you are under attack from a gang of thugs, the idea of filling in a Visitor Incident Report Form does not help to calm the situation. This does not appear to have been an isolated incident on this canal. Numerous friends of mine have told me of similar experiences.

BW says that they are taking measures to improve the situation, including CCTV, but can the problems really be solved?

Until the situation improves on the Ashton Canal I would suggest that, at the very least, there should be prominent signs displayed at both ends of the canal warning of the possible dangers. Ideally there should be lock keepers at both ends to stop and advise anyone entering the canal. There should also be the offer of escorted passage along the canal.

Why should waterways licence payers be expected to put up with criminal and possibly life-threatening behaviour?

Yours

Tim Hilton

Thank you for writing to *Waterfront*. I was sorry to hear of the bad experiences you had in July on the Ashton Canal.

Unfortunately, as in other areas of society, there is an increase in anti-social behaviour along our waterways. Our visitors safety and security is our primary concern. We would always urge our visitors to report any such incidents to the Police, to seek their immediate assistance, and to get a crime number. BW people would always be willing to help, but staff, including patrol officers, do not have the authority to arrest.

All the best advice suggests that in the long run we will achieve results by working with local partners including police forces and local authorities. We do this as actively as we can. Recent examples include the regeneration at New Islington, Manchester where security cameras have been installed and are monitored by our partners. In that area, we are also assisting local community groups to set up youth fishing clubs, as well as establishing links with local and community-police initiatives.

We can only solve this problem by working in partnership. The Visitor Incident Report Form is one of the ways of doing this. It is accepted that, although initially this report will not remedy the situation, it will help us to identify 'hotspots', present evidence to partners and work with them to solve the problems.

Please do again accept my apologies and be assured that we are working hard to protect all of our visitors, no matter where they are.

Debbie Lumb, service manager, North West Waterways

Dear Editor

I have received the new *Waterfront* Issue Autumn/Winter 2004 and as usual it has plenty of articles and photos on narrowboats, new facilities at Llangollen for narrowboats, Calendar 2005 what's on the front, narrowboats. Have British Waterways forgotten that cruisers also pay for licenses and moorings? Come on let's have some photos of cruisers, articles on cruisers, events for cruisers - seems that BW are narrow minded people.

Paul Cantillion

Whilst we know that narrowboats are very popular you are right to point out that in the last issue of *Waterfront* we did not include any images of cruisers. Hopefully you will have found that this issue contains articles and information that are relevant to all of our boaters, whether cruiser or narrowboat owners, and even some images of cruisers too!

Gill Owen, editor

Dear Editor

How I empathize with your readers P Pickett and A Vallen as I too have had poor service from BW and certainly not value for money.

I wrote recently to the manager responsible for the section of the system that I had good reason to complain about. The reply from customer services was dismissive and stated "its very difficult for staff to be everywhere at once, the equipment was stolen and customers must try to be patient". The complaints addressed amongst other things, filthy sanitary stations, floating rubbish, blocked bi-washes, knee high vegetation at moorings and overflowing rubbish bins. It may interest readers to know, of the 2,000 staff you speak of, how many are bankside? Excluding all the supervisors, managers and mobile lock keepers.

Cont...

The latters sole task being to give commercial vessels passage through a number of locks.

I will stop now before I get on a roll.

Ted Milsom

I firstly would like to stress that in no way was our letter to you meant to be dismissive, and I must apologise if it came across in that manner - it really wasn't our intention.

In our reply we apologised that some of our facilities were in an unsatisfactory condition. I am now pleased to report, that following your letter, the issues raised have now been remedied. Thank you for taking the time to inform us of these problems, and do continue to inform us of any other problems you encounter in the future.

You were also interested to know how many of BWs 2,000 staff work on the bank. BW currently employs over 800 people who work on the canal bank, a figure which has remained fairly constant over the last decade. We have an apprenticeship scheme and multi-skills training for our bank staff, along with a new £22million investment programme over the next five years in new boats and equipment.

Janet Baverstock, service manager, Yorkshire Waterways

Dear *Waterfront*

With reference to a couple of the letters you printed in Issue 9 I felt, as a boater, I had to respond.

In an ideal world nobody wants litter in the canals, but blame the litter louts and vandals. BW does the best they can (lots of miles to clear and not enough manpower). Why don't the boater's lend a hand? We have a fisherman's landing net and pick up bottles, cans, bags etc put them into a bin bag and then into the BW refuse areas. Anything large, phone the BW office and they will remove it.

If you don't want to use the free sticky wallet provided for your licence then laminate your licence and stand it up in the corner of one of your 'beautiful windows'. That's the bit in defence of BW so hope it helps.

Unfortunately I also have an axe to grind. I appreciate that the entrances to canals have to be secure to prevent people parking their cars where they shouldn't, but do BW realise how upsetting it is to get to a five barred gate to find it padlocked, and not with the usual BW lock, so the likes of me, on a disability scooter can't get to the public highway to go shopping etc. This has happened to me recently on the Trent & Mersey Canal. Just a little note, remember that access to places for the disabled is now law and a small thing like this is not going to cost a fortune to rectify.

Sorry I had to whinge, but again it's not an ideal world. Yours sincerely.

Geraldine Prescott

Thank you for your letter, and I am pleased to say that Central Shires Waterways has investigated the situation at the gate at Bridge 58 on the Trent & Mersey Canal. I can report that a RADAR (Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation) Lock is currently being purchased and fitted to this gate, meaning that access will now be available for you and other mobility scooter and wheelchair users.

Gill Owen, editor

Dear Editor

Why do you go on about 0800 numbers when they are not free calls from mobile phones? The Canalphone numbers seem handy, but surely BBC local radio would be better. The BBC has travel units, so use them for emergency stoppage announcements.

Alan J Moody

We very much appreciate all calls to the emergency number, and are grateful when anyone reports a problem to us. The emergency number is provided as a portfolio of services from the West Midlands Ambulance Service.

They provide a year-round, 24-hour a day service by identifying the location of the reported emergency and contact BW to alert it to the problem. Whilst the West Midlands Ambulance Service cannot return calls, BW offices can, and will.

Our customer relations manager, Eugene Baston, has investigated the practice of mobile phone networks charging for the use of 0800 numbers. The different operators have varying approaches to free call numbers, and none of them offer a free call service.

Our media teams across the waterway units work closely with the county radio stations, keeping them up-to-date with all news regarding our network, from major incidents, such as a canal breach through to waterway festivals and events. It is then at the discretion of each radio station as to how they use the information. Stoppage information can be accessed via Waterscape.com, they will email you updates of stoppages across the whole network or an area of your choice if you register at http://www.waterscape.com/boating/stoppages/tools.html. See page 2 for further details about receiving stoppage information.

Gill Owen, editor

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We spent a great deal of time and effort to ensure that our web design house knew exactly what our customers needed and they have provided an excellent, easy to use information portal that not only offers static information, but also gives our customers the facility of electronically down-loading the full colour brochure. The feedback we receive from all visitors to our site is that they rank it as the best brokerage web site. We contribute this success to our understanding of customers' needs and our many years of boating experience, including living aboard. Now customers can view our boats in the comfort of their own home and together with the CD-ROM enjoy a 'virtual' walk through and full details of every room and what is behind the scenes.

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As one would expect, we have also invested heavily in our computer infrastructure and all enquiries are entered onto our database, including their key requirements. This database is regularly cleansed and can give us up to the minute information on our customers' requirements. This is why many of our boats are sold before they even reach the web site.

We are the only broker in the world to offer this type of service. The detailled information and high quality service takes a great deal of time and hard work, but such is our committment to offer value for money, we charge no more than the more conventional brokers.

We are not complacent and still look at ways to improve our service so that no one can offer better. We are so confident that our service is the best that we say "IF YOU CAN FIND A BETTER, MORE COMPREHENSIVE SERVICE, WE WILL SELL YOUR BOAT FOR FREE." There simply is no better service out there, we know this because we continually compare our offering to that of our competitors worldwide.

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